

# Safe Jobs for Youth Month Resource Kit

## Sample Article for Parents

### Your Teen's First Job—Making It Safe

Did you know that every six minutes, somewhere in the U.S., a teenager is injured seriously enough on the job to go to a hospital emergency room? The good news is that most of these injuries can be prevented if parents, employers, teens, and others work together. California's Governor Davis has once again proclaimed May as "Safe Jobs for Youth Month" to help bring this message home.

Safe Jobs for Youth Month is being promoted by many organizations throughout California including the California Parent Teacher Association, California Teachers Association, California Federation of Teachers, Cal/OSHA, the Department of Education, and local job training and community organizations. Their goal is to educate teens, parents, teachers, and employers about the laws that protect teens at work, and what teens and employers can do to prevent job injuries.

### What Parents Can Do

Teen employment is at an all-time high. As summer approaches, many more teens are eager to find work. Working can give teens money, skills, and self-confidence, but not if they are injured on the job. Parents are often the ones teens go to first for information and advice about jobs. In order to advise their children, parents must know how to promote safety on the job and a healthy work environment. Here are some helpful tips.

Be aware of the laws that protect youth on the job. California labor laws prohibit teens from working late and/or long hours, and from doing especially dangerous work.

Also, Cal/OSHA regulations require that the workplace be safe and that workers receive health and safety training on the tasks they do.

Make sure your teenager has a work permit. In California, even during the summer, youth under 18 must have a permit to work on any job (unless they have already graduated). This helps assure that the jobs comply with child labor laws. Students apply for work permits at their school or district office.

Talk to your teen frequently about the job. Ask about:

- **Tasks.** Find out what your teen does. For example, does the job require heavy lifting or highly repetitive tasks? Are teen employees asked to drive occasionally?

- **Training.** Does your teen receive proper training? If asked to perform a new task, he or she should be trained before doing it.
- **The workplace.** Are there slippery floors, locked or blocked exit doors, crowded areas, or machines without safety guards?
- **The supervisor.** Is the supervisor usually present at work, or do teens work alone? Find out if the supervisor shows concern toward the employees and encourages questions.

Help your teen with problems at work. If he or she has concerns about hours or job safety, talk about what changes are needed and why, whose help might be needed, and how to approach the supervisor. If you need help answering a question, try the website [www.youngworkers.org](http://www.youngworkers.org) or phone the Young Worker Resource Line at 1-888-933-TEEN.

Set limits on hours. If your teen is overtired or having trouble keeping up with schoolwork, he or she may be working too many hours. Help your teen reduce work hours. The law limits work hours for teens, but excessive hours are the most frequently cited child labor law violation.

Find out more. The California Resource Network for Young Worker Health and Safety, which is administered by U.C. Berkeley's Labor Occupational Health Program (LOHP), has two factsheets for teens. *Are You a Working Teen?* and *Are You a Teen Working in Agriculture?* are available in both Spanish and English. There is also a factsheet for employers, called *Facts for Employers: Safer Jobs for Teens*. These short, easy-to-read factsheets summarize the key labor and safety laws that protect teens, as well as other important workplace rights. To get copies, contact us at 1-888-933-TEEN or download from our website, [www.youngworkers.org](http://www.youngworkers.org).

## **The California Labor Code and Teen Workers**

California's Labor Code prohibits workers under the age of 18 from doing certain kinds of hazardous work. It also sets the hours that teens may work, both during the school year and during the summer. Key restrictions for workers under age 18 are listed below. This list is not complete, but covers the most common and important restrictions.

### **In California no worker under 18 may:**

- Drive a motor vehicle on public streets as part of the job, or work as an outside helper on a motor vehicle.
- Operate power-driven machinery, including meat slicers, box crushers, forklifts, and circular saws.
- Handle, serve, or sell alcoholic beverages.
- Work in wrecking, demolition, or roofing.

**Also, no one under 16 may:**

- Work in building or construction.
- Work in manufacturing or food processing.
- Do baking or cooking on the job (except at a serving counter).
- Work on a ladder or scaffold.
- Load or unload trucks.
- Dispense gas or oil.
- Clean, wash, or polish cars.

**Summer Work Hours**

- Workers age 14 and 15 may work up to 40 hours a week, 8 hours a day, between the hours of 7 am and 9 pm.
- Workers age 16 and 17 may work up to 48 hours a week, 8 hours a day, between the hours of 5 am and 12:30 am.
- Hours are much more restricted when school is in session.

**Work Permits**

With certain limited exceptions, youth under 18 who take a job must have a work permit issued by the school district. Applications are available from their school site or from the main district office. Work permits are not required for youth who have graduated from high school or have passed the high school equivalency exam.

*—Developed by the California Resource Network for Young Worker Health and Safety*